

THE LIFE OF

Admiral BLAKE,

CONTAINING

An Account of the gallant Actions of that
Brave Commander, in the several Expedi-
tions wherein he served against the *Dutch*,
Spaniards, &c. Together with his Cha-
racter in private Life, and during his being
a Member of the Celebrated Parliament
1640.

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THE PREFACE.

At a Time when the Nation is engaged in a War with an Enemy, whose Insults, Ravages and Barbarities have long called for Vengeance, an Account of such English Commanders as have merited the Acknowledgments of Posterity, by extending the Power, and raising the Honour of their Country, seem to be no improper Entertainment for our Readers. We shall therefore attempt a succinct Narrative of the Life and Actions of Admiral BLAKE, in which we have nothing further in View than to do Justice to his Bravery and Conduct, without intending any Parallel between his At: serv-ments and those of our present Admirals.

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THE FINE OF LITERATURE

Admiral BLAKE.

ROBERT BLAKE was born at Bridgewater, in Somersetshire, in August 1598, his Father being a Merchant of that Place, who had acquired a considerable Fortune by the Spanish Trade. Of his earliest Years we have no Account and therefore can amuse the Reader with none of those Prognosticks of his future Actions, so often met with in Memoirs. In 1615 he entered into the University of Oxford, where he continued till 1623, though without being much countenanced or carressed by his Superiors; for he was more than once disappointed in his Endeavours after Academical Preferments. It is observable, that Mr. Wood (in his

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his *Athenæ Oxonienses*) ascribes the Repulse he met with at *Wadham* College, where he was Competitor for a Fellowship, either to want of Learning, or of Stature. With regard to the first Objection, the same Writer had before informed us, that he was an *early Riser*, and *studious*, tho' he sometimes relieved his Attention by the Amusements of Fowling and Fishing. As it is highly probable that he did not want Capacity, we may therefore conclude, upon this Confession of his Diligence, that he could not fail of being learned, at least in the Degree requisite to the Enjoyment of a Fellowship; and may safely ascribe his Disappointment to his want of Stature, it being the Custom of Sir *Henry Saville*, then Warden of that College, to pay much regard to the outward Appearance of those who solicited Preferment in that Society. So much do the greatest Events owe sometimes to Accident or Folly!

He afterwards retired to his native Place, where he *lived* (says *Clarendon*) *without any Appearance of Ambition to be a greater Man than he was*, *but inseighed with great Freedom against the Licence of the Times, and Power of the Court.*

In 1640 he was chosen Burgess for *Bridgewater* by the Puritan Party, to whom he had recommended himself by his Disapprobation of Bishop *Land's* Violence and Severity, and his Non-compliance with those new Ceremonies which he was then endeavouring to introduce.

When the Civil War broke out, *Blake*, in conformity with his avowed Principles, declared for the Parliament; and, thinking a bare Declaration for Right not all the Duty of a good Man, raised a Troop of Dragoons for his Party, and appeared in the Field with so much Bravery, that he was in a short Time advanced, without meeting any of those Obstructions which he had encountered in the University.

In 1645 he was Governor of *Taunton*, when the Lord *Goring* came before it with an Army of 10,000 Men. The Town was ill fortified, and unsupplied with almost every Thing necessary for supporting a Siege. The State of this Garrison encouraged Colonel *Windham*, who was acquainted with *Blake*, to propose a Capitulation, which was rejected by *Blake* with Indignation and Contempt: Nor were either Menaces or Persuasions of any Effect; for he maintained the Place

Place, under all its Disadvantages, till the Siege was raised by the Parliament's Army.

He continued, on many other Occasions, to give Proofs of an insuperable Courage, and a Sreadiness of Resolution not to be shaken; and, as a Proof of his firm Adherence to the Parliament, joined with the Borough of *Taunton* in returning Thanks for their Resolution to make no more Addresses to the King. Yet was he so far from approving the Death of *Charles I.* that he made no Scruple of declaring, that he would venture his Life to save him, as willingly as he had done to serve the Parliament.

In February 1648-9, he was made a Commissioner of the Navy, and appointed to serve on that Element, for which he seems by Nature to have been designed. He was soon afterwards sent in Pursuit of Prince *Rupert*, whom he flew up in the Harbour of *King'sale* in *Ireland* for several Months, till want of Provisions, and Despair of Relief, excited the Prince to make a daring Effort for his Escape, by forcing thro' the Parliament's Fleet: This Design he executed with his usual Intrepidity, and succeeded in it, tho' with the Loss of three Ships. He was pursued by *Blake* to the Coast of *Portugal*, where he was received into the *Tagus*, and treated with great Distinction by the *Portuguese*.

Blake coming to the Mouth of that River, sent to the King a Messenger to inform him, that the Fleet in his Port belonging to the publick Enemies of the Common-wealth of *England*, he demanded Leave to fall upon it. This being refused, tho' the Refusal was in very soft Terms, and accompanied with Declarations of Esteem, and a Present of Provisions, so exasperated the Admiral, that, without any Hesitation, he fell upon the *Portuguese* Fleet, then returning from *Braſil*, of which he took 17 Ships, and burnt 3. It was to no Purpose that the King of *Portugal*, alarmed at so unexpected a Destruction, ordered Prince *Rupert* to attack them, and rescue the *Braſil* Ships. *Blake* carried home his Prizes without Molestation, the Prince not having Force enough to pursue him, and well pleased with the Opportunity of quitting a Port where he could no longer be protected.

Blake soon supplied his Fleet with Provisions, and received Orders to make Reprisals upon the *French*, who had suffered

suffered their Privateers to molest the *English* Trade; an Injury which, in those Days, was always immediately resented, and, if not repaired, certainly punished. Sailing with this Commission he took in his Way a *French* Man of War valued at a Million. How this Ship happened to be so rich we are not informed, but as it was a Cruiser, it is probable the rich Lading was the accumulated Plunder of many Prizes. Then following the unfortunate *Rupert*, whose Fleets by Storms and Battles was now reduced to 5 Ships, into *Cartagena*, he demanded Leave of the *Spaniard* Governor to attack him in the Harbour; but received the same Answer which had been returned by the *Portuguese*: That they had a Right to protect all Ships that came into their Dominions; that if the Admiral were forced in thither, he should find the same Security; and that he required him not to violate the Peace of a neutral Port. *Blake* withdrew upon this Answer into the *Mediterranean*, and *Rupert* then leaving *Cartagena* entered the Port of *Malaga*, where he burnt and sunk several *English* Merchant Ships. *Blake* judging this to be an Infringement of the Neutrality professed by the *Spaniards*, now made no Scruple to fall upon *Rupert's* Fleet in the Harbour of *Malaga*, and having destroyed 3 of his Ships, obliged him to quit the Sea, and take Sanctuary at the *Spaniard* Court.

In February 1650-1, *Blake*, still continuing to cruise in the *Mediterranean*, met with a *French* Ship of considerable Force, and commanded the Captain to come on board, there being no War declared between the two Nations. The Captain, when he came, was asked by him, whether he was willing to *lay down his Sword, and yield*; which he gallantly refused, though in his Enemy's Power: *Blake*, scorning to take advantage of an Artifice, and dreading the Appearance of Treachery, told him that he was at liberty to *go back to his Ship, and defend it as long as he could*. The Captain willingly accepted his Offer, and after a Fight of two Hours confessed himself conquered, kissed his Sword, and surrendered it.

In 1652 broke out the memorable War between the two Commonwealths of *England* and *Holland*; a War, in which the greatest Admirals, that perhaps any Age has produced, were engaged on each Side, in which nothing less was contested than the Dominion of the Sea, and which was carried on

on with Vigour, A nimosity and Resolution, proportioned to the Importance of the Dispute. The chief Commanders of the Dutch Fleets where *Van Tromp*, *de Ruyter* and *de Witt*, the most celebrated Names of their own Nation, and who had been perhaps more renowned, had they been opposed by any other Enemies. The States of *Holland* having carried on their Trade without Opposition, and almost without Competition, not only during the unactive Reign of *James I.* but during the Commotions of *England*, had arrived to that Height of Naval Power, and that Affluence of Wealth, that, with the Arrogance which a long-continued Prosperity naturally produces, they began to invent new Claims, and to treat other Nations with Insolence, which nothing can defend but Superiority of Force. They had for some Time made uncommon Preparations at a vast Expence, and had equipped a large Fleet, without any apparent Danger threatening them, or any avowed Design of attacking their Neighbours. This unusual Armament was not beheld by the *English* without some Jealousy, and care was taken to fit out such a Fleet, as might secure the Trade from Interruption, and the Coasts from Insults; of this *Blake* was constituted Admiral for 9 Months. In this Situation the two Nations remained, keeping a watchful Eye upon each other, without actual Hostilities on either Side, till the 18th of May, 1652, when *Van Tromp* appeared in the *Downs* with a Fleet of 45 Men of War. *Blake*, who had then but 20 Ships, upon the Approach of the Dutch Admiral, saluted him with 3 single Shots, to require that he should, by striking his Flag, shew that Respect to the *English*, which is due to every Nation in their own Dominions: To which the *Dutchman* answered with a Broadside; and *Blake*, perceiving that he intended to dispute the Point of Honour, advanced with his own Ship before the rest of his Fleet, that, if it were possible, a general Battle might be prevented. But the *Dutch*, instead of admitting him to treat, fired upon him from their whole Fleet, without any regard to the Customs of War, or the Law of Nations. *Blake* for some time stood alone against their whole Force, till the rest of his Squadron coming up, the Fight was continued from between 4 and 5 in the Afternoon till 9 at Night, when the *Dutch* retired with the Loss of 2 Ships, having not destroyed a single

single Vessel, nor more than 15 Men, most of which were on board the Admiral, who, as he wrote to the Parliament, was himself engaged for 4 Hours with the main Body of the Dutch Fleet, being the Mark at which they aimed; and, as Whitlock relates, received above a thousand Shot. *Blake* in his Letter acknowledges the particular Blessing and Preservation of God, and ascribes his Success to the Justice of his Cause, the Dutch having first attacked him upon the English Coast. It is indeed little less than miraculous, that a thousand great Shot should do no more Execution, and those who will not admit the Interposition of Providence, may draw at least this Inference from it, that *the bravest Man is not always in the most Danger.*

In July he met the Dutch Fishery Fleet with a Convoy of 12 Men of War, all which he took, with 100 of their Herring Buffes. And in September, being stationed in the Downs with about 60 Sail, he discovered the Dutch Admirals *de Witt* and *de Ruyter* with near the same Number, and advanced towards them; but the Dutch being obliged, by the Nature of their Coast, and Shallowness of their Rivers, to build their Ships in such a Manner that they require less Depth of Water than the English Vessels, took Advantage of the Form of their Shipping, and sheltered themselves behind a *Fiat* called *Kens-knack*; so that the English, finding some of their Ships aground, were obliged to alter their Course; but perceiving early the next Morning that the *Hollanders* had forsaken their Station, they pursued them with all the Speed that the Wind, which was weak and uncertain, allowed; but found themselves unable to reach them with the Bulk of their Fleet, and therefore detached some of the lightest Frigates to chase them. These came so near as to fire upon them about three in the Afternoon; but the Dutch, instead of tacking about, hoisted their Sails, steered toward their own Coast, and finding themselves the next Day followed by the whole English Fleet, retired into *Goree*. The Sailors were eager to attack them in their own Harbours, but a Council of War being convened, it was judged imprudent to hazard the Fleet upon the Shoals, or to engage in any important Enterprise without a fresh Supply of Provisions.

That in this Engagement the Victory belonged to the English is beyond Dispute, since, without the Loss of one Ship, and with no more than 40 Men killed, they drove the Enemy

(9) my into his own Ports, took the Rear Admiral, and another Vessel, and so discouraged the Dutch Admirals, who had not agreed in their Measures, that *de Ruyter*, who had declared against hazarding a Battle, desired to resign his Commission, and *de Witt*, who had insisted upon Fighting, fell sick, as it was supposed, with vexation. But how great the Loss of the *Lutje* is not certainly known; that two were taken they are too wise to deny, but affirm that those two were all that were destroyed. The *English*, on the other Side, affirm that 3 of their Vessels were disabled at the first Encounter, that their Numbers on the second Day were visibly diminished, and that on the last Day they saw 3 or 4 Ships sink in their Flight.

De Witt being now discharged by the *Hollanders* as unfortunate, and the chief Command restored to *Van Trump*, great Preparations were made for retrieving their Reputation, and repairing their Losses. Their Endeavours were assisted by the *English*, themselves, now made factious by Success, the Men who who were intrusted with the civil Administration, being jealous of those whose military Commands had procured so much Honour, lest they who raised them should be eclipsed by them. Such is generally the Revolution of Affairs in every State; Danger and Distress produce Unity and Bravery, Virtues which are seldom unattended with Success; but Success is the Parent of Pride, and Pride of Jealousy and Faction; Faction makes Way for Calamity, and happy is that Nation whose Calamities renew their Unity. Such is the Rotation of Interests, that equally tends to hinder the total Destruction of a People, and to obstruct an exorbitant Increase of Power.

Blake had weaken'd his Fleet by many Detachments, and lay with no more than 40 Sail in the *Downs*, very ill provided both with Men and Ammunition, and expecting new Supplies from those whose Animosity hinder'd them from providing them, and who chose rather to see the Trade of their Country distress'd, than the Sea-officers exalted by a new Acquisition of Honour and Influence.

Van Trump, desirous of distinguishing himself at the Reputation of his Command, by some remarkable Action, had assembled 80 Ships of War, and 10 Fire-ships, and steered towards the *Downs*, where *Blake*, with whose Condition and Strength he was probably acquainted, was then stationed.

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Blake not able to restrain his natural Ardour, or perhaps not fully informed of the Superiority of his Enemies, put out to encounter them, tho' his Fleet was so weakly man'd, that half of his Ships were obliged to lie idle without engaging for want of Sailors: The Force of the whole *Dutch* Fleet was therefore sustained by about 22 Ships. Two of the *English* Frigates, named the *Vanguard* and *Victory*, after having for a long time stood engaged amidst the whole *Dutch* Fleet, broke thro' without much Injury, nor did the *English* lose any Ships till the Evening, when the *Garland* carrying 40 Guns was boarded at once by two great Ships, which were opposed by the *English* till they had scarcely any Men left to defend the Decks, then retiring into the lower Part of the Vessel they blew up their Decks, which were now possessed by the Enemy, and at length were overpowered and taken. The *Bonaventure*, a stout well built Merchant-ship, going to relieve the *Garland*, was attacked by a Man of War, and, after a stout Resistance, in which the Captain, who defended her with the utmost Bravery, was killed, was likewise carried off by the *Dutch*. *Blake* in the *Triumph*, seeing the *Garland* in distress, pressed forward to relieve her, but in his way had his Foremast shatter'd, and was himself boarded, but bearing off the Enemies he disengaged himself, and retired into the *Thames* with the Loss only of two Ships of Force, and 4 small Frigates, but with his whole Fleet much shattered. Nor was the Victory gained at a cheap Rate, notwithstanding the unusual Disproportion of Strength, for of the *Dutch* Flagships one was blown up, and the other two disabled. A Proof of the *English* Bravery; which should have induced *Van Trump* to have spared the Insolence of carrying a Broom at his Top-mast in his triumphant Passage thro' the Channel, which he intended as a Declaration that he would sweep the Seas of the *English* Shipping; this, which he had little Reason to think of accomplishing, he soon after perished in attempting.

There are sometimes Observations and Enquiries, which all Historians seem to decline by Agreement, of which this Action may afford us an Example: Nothing appears at the first View more to demand our Curiosity, or afford Matter for Examination, than this wild Encounter of 22 Ships with a Force,

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a Force, according to their Accounts who favour the *Dutch*, three times superior; nothing can justify a Commander in fighting under such Disadvantages, but the Impossibility of retreating. But what hindered *Blake* from retiring as well before the Fight as after it? To say he was ignorant of the Strength of the *Dutch* Fleet, is to impure to him a very criminal Degree of Negligence, and, at least, it must be confessed that, from the time he saw them, he could not but know that they were too powerful to be opposed by him, and even then there was Time for retreat. To urge the Ardour of his Sailors is to divest him of the Authority of a Commander, and to charge him with the most reproachful Weakness that can enter into the Character of a General. To mention the Imperiousness of his own Courage, is to make the Blame of his Temerity equal to the Praise of his Valour; which seems indeed to be the most gentle Censure that the Truth of History will allow. We must then admire, amidst our Elogies and Applauses, that the great, the wise, and the valiant *Blake* was once betrayed to an inconsiderate and desperate Enterprise, by the restless Ardour of his own Spirit, and a noble Jealousy of the Honour of his Country. It was not long before he had an Opportunity of revenging his Loss, and restraining the Insolence of the *Dutch*. On the 18th of February 1652-3 *Blake* being at the Head of 80 Sail, and assisted, at his own Request, by Cols. *Monk* and *Dean*, espied *Van Tromp* with a Fleet of above 100 Men of War, as *Glenenden* relates, of 70 by their own publick Accounts, and 300 Merchant Ships under his Convoy. The *English*, with their usual Intrepidity, advanced towards them, and *Blake* in the *Triumph*, in which he always led his Fleet, with 12 Ships more, came to an Engagement with the main Body of the *Dutch* Fleet, and by the Disparity of their Force was reduced to the last Extremity, having received in his Hull no fewer than 700 Shots, when *Lawson* in the *Fairfax* came in, and the Fight was continued with the utmost Despatch. The rest of the *English* Fleet now came in, and the Fight was continued with the utmost Despatch of Vigour and Resolution, till the Night gave the *Dutch* an Opportunity of retiring with the Loss of one Flag-ship, and 6 other Men of War. The *English* had many Vessels damaged, but none lost. On board *Lawson's* Ship were kill'd 100 Men, and as many on board *Blake's*, who lost his Captain and Secretary, and himself received a Wound in the Thigh.

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Blake having set ashore his wounded Men, sailed in Pursuit of *Van Trump*, who sent his Convoy before, and himself retired fighting towards *Bulloign*. *Blake* ordering his light Frigates to follow the Merchants, still continued to harass *Van Trump*; and, on the third, the 20th of February, the two Fleets came to another Battle, in which *Van Trump* once more retired before the *English*, and making Use of the peculiar Form of his Shipping secured himself in the Shoals. The Accounts of this Fight, as of all the others, are various; but the Dutch Writers themselves confess that they lost 8 Men of War, and more than 20 Merchant-ships; and it is probable that they suffered much more than they are willing to allow, for these repeated Defeats provoked the common People to Riots and Insurrections, and obliged the States to ask, tho' ineffectually, for Peace.

In April following the Form of Government in *England* was changed, and the Supreme Authority assumed by *Cromwell*; upon which Occasion *Blake*, with his Associates, declared that, notwithstanding the Change of the Administration, they should still be ready to discharge their Trust, and to defend the Nation from Insults, Injuries, and Encroachments. "It is not," says *Blake*, the Business of a Seaman to mind State-Affairs, but to hinder Foreigners from fooling us." This was the Principle from which he never deviated, and which he always endeavoured to inculcate in the Fleet, as the surest Foundation of Unanimity and Steadiness. "Disturb not one another with domesick Disputes, but remember that we are *English*, and our Enemies are Foreigners. Enemies! which let what Party soever prevail, it is equally the Interest of our Country to humble and restrain."

After the 30th of April 1653, *Blake*, *Monk*, and *Dean* sailed out of the *English* Harbours with 100 Men of War, and finding the *Dutch* with 70 Sail on their own Coasts, drove them to the *Texel*, and took 50 Doggers. Then they sailed northward in pursuit of *Van Trump*, who having a Fleet of Merchants under his Convoy, durst not enter the Channel, but steering towards the *Sound*, and by great Dexterity and Address escaped the three *English* Admirals, and brought all his Ships into their Harbour; then knowing that *Blake* was still in the North, came before *Dover*, and fired upon the Town, but was driven off by the Castle. *Monk* and *Dean* stationed themselves again at the Mouth of

of the *Texel*, and block'd up the *Dutch* in their own Ports with 80 Sail; but hearing that *Van Trump* was at *Goree* with 120 Men of War, they ordered all Ships of Force in the River and Ports to repair to them.

On *June 3d*, the two Fleets came to an Engagement, in the beginning of which *Don* was carried off by a Cannon Ball, yet the Fight continued from about 12 to 5 in the Afternoon, when the *Dutch* gave way, and retreated fighting.

On the 4th, in the Afternoon, *Blake* came up with 18 French Ships, and procured the *English* a compleat Victory; nor could the *Dutch* any otherwise preserve their Ships than by retiring once more into the Flats and Shallows, where the largest of the *English* Vessels could not approach.

In this Battle *Van Trump* boarded Vice-Admiral *Pen*, but was beaten off, and himself boarded, and reduced to blow up his Decks, of which the *English* had gotten Possession. He was then entered at once by *Pen* and another, nor could possibly have escaped had not *de Ruyter* and *de Witt* arrived at that instant and rescued him.

However the *Dutch* may endeavour to extenuate their Loss in this Battle, by admiring no more than 8 Ships to have been taken or destroy'd, it is evident that they must have received much greater Damages, not only by the Accounts of more impartial Historians, but by the Remonstrances and Exclamations of their Admirals themselves, *Van Trump* declaring before the *States*, that *without a numerous Reinforcement* of large Men of War he could serve them *no more*, and *de Witt* crying out before them, with the natural Warmth of his Character, *Why should I be silent before my Lords and Masters?* *The English are our Masters, and by consequence Masters of the Sea.*

In November, 1654, *Blake* was sent by *Cromwell* into the Mediterranean with a powerful Fleet, and may be said to have received the Homage of all that Part of the World: Being equally courted by the haughty *Spaniards*, the surly *Dutch*, and the lawless *Algiers*.

In March, 1666, having forced *Algiers* to Submission, he entered the Harbour of *Tunis*, and demanded Reparation for the Robberies practised upon the *English* by the Pirates of that Place, and insisted that the Captives of his Nation should be set at liberty. The Governor having planted Batteries along the Shore, and drawn up his Ships under the Castles, sent *Blake* an haughty and insolent Answer,

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*There are our Cruftes of Golerra and Porto Ferino, said he, upon which you may do your worst; adding other Menaces and Insults, and mentioning in Terms of Ridicule the Inequality of a Fight between Ships and Castles. Blake had likewise demanded leave to take in Water, which was refused him. Fired with this inhuman and insolent Treatment, he curled his Whiskers, as was his Custom when he was angry, and entering Porto Ferino with his great Ships discharged his Shot so fast upon the Batteries and Castles, that in two Hours the Guns were dismounted, and the Works forsaken, though he was at first exposed to the Fire of 60 Cannon. He then ordered his Officers to send out their Long Boats well man'd to seize 9 of the Piratical Ships lying in the Road, himself continued to fire upon the Castle. This was so bravely executed, that with the Loss of only 25 Men killed, and 48 wounded, all the Ships were fired in the sight of *Tunis*. Thence sailing to *Tripoli* he concluded a Peace with that Nation, then returning to *Tunis* he found nothing but Submission: And such indeed was his Reputation, that he met with no farther Opposition, but collected a kind of Tribute from the Princes of those Countries, his Business being to demand Reparation for all the Injuries offered to the *English* during the Civil Wars. He exacted from the Duke of *Tuscany* 60,000*l.* and, as it is said, sent home 16 Ships laden with the Effects which he had received from the several States.*

The Respect with which he obliged all Foreigners to treat his Countrymen appears from a Story related by Bishop *Berset*. When he lay before *Malaga*, in a time of Peace with *Spain*, some of his Sailors went ashore, and meeting a Procession of the *Hoff*, not only refused to pay any Respect to it, but laughing at those that did. The People being put, by one of the Priests, upon resenting this Indignity, fell upon them, and beat them severely. When they returned to their Ship, they complained of their ill Treatment; upon which *Blake* sent to demand the Priest who had procured it. The Viceroy answered that, having no Authority over the Priests, he could not send him; to which *Blake* replied, *that he did not enquire into the Extent of the Viceroy's Authority, but that if the Priest were not sent within 3 Hours, he would burn the Town*. The Viceroy then sent the Priest to him, who pleaded the Provocation given by the Seamen. *Blake* bravely and rati-

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did he, onally answered, that if he had complained to him, he would have punished them severely, for he would not have his Men affront the established Religion of any Place; but that he was angry that the *Spaniards* should assume that Power, for he would have all the World know, that an Englishman was only to be punished by an Englishman. So having used the Priest civilly, he sent him back, being satisfied that he was in his Power. This Conduct so much pleased Cromwell, that he read the Letter with great Satisfaction, and said, *He hoped to make the Name of an Englishman as great as ever that of a Roman had been.*

In 1656, the Protector, having declared War against Spain, dispatched *Blake* with 25 Men of War, to infest their Coasts, and intercept their Shipping. In pursuance of these Orders he cruised all Winter about the *Streights*, and then lay at the Mouth of the Harbour of *Cales*, where he received Intelligence that the *Spaniard* Plate-Fleet lay at Anchor in the Bay of *Santa Cruz*, in the Isle of *Tereriffe*. On the 13th of April 1657, he departed from *Cales*, and on the 20th arrived at *Santa Cruz*, where he found 16 *Spaniard* Vessels. The Bay was defended on the northside by a Castle well mounted with Cannon; and in other Parts with 7 Forts, with Cannon proportioned to the Bigness, all united by a Line of Communication manned with Musquereers. The *Spaniard* Admiral drew up his small Ships under the Cannon of the Castle, and stationed 6 great Galleons with their Broad-sides to the Sea: An advantageous and prudent Disposition, but of little Effect against the *English* Commander; who determining to attack them, ordered *Stanyer* to enter the Bay with his Squadron; then posting some of his largest Ships to play upon the Fortifications, himself attacked the Galleons, which, after a gallant Resistance, were at length abandoned by the *Spaniards*, tho' the least of them was bigger than the biggest of *Blake's* Ships. The Forts and smaller Vessels being now shattered and forsaken, the whole Fleet was set on fire, the Galleons by *Blake*, and the smallest Vessels by *Stanyer*, the *English* Vessels being too much scattered in the Fight to bring them away. Thus was the whole Plate-Fleet destroyed, and the *Spaniards*, according to *Rapin's* Remark, *sustained a great Loss of Ships, Money, Men and Merchandise, while the English gained nothing but Glory*. As if he that increases the military Reputation of a People did not increase their Power,

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er, and he that weakens his Enemy in effect strengthens himself.

The whole Action, says Clarendon, was so incredible, that all Men, who knew the Place, wondered that any sober Man, with what Courage soever endued, would ever have undertaken it, and they could hardly persuade themselves to believe what they had done. While the Spaniards comforted themselves with the Belief, that they were Devils and not Men who had destroyed them in such a Manner. So much a strong Resolution of bold and courageous Men can bring to pass, that no Resistance or Advantage of Ground can disappoint them; and it can hardly be imagined how small a Loss the English sustained in this unparalleled Action, not one Ship being left behind, and the Killed and Wounded not exceeding 200 Men, when the Slaughter on board the Spanish Ships and on Shore was incredible. The General cruised for some time afterwards with his victorious Fleet at the Mouth of Cales, to intercept the Spanish Shipping; but finding his Constitution broken by the Fatigue of the last 5 Years, determined to return home, and dyed before he came to Land.

His Body was embalmed, and having lain some time in State at Greenwich House, was buried in Henry VII's Chapel, with all the funeral Solemnity due to the Remains of a Man so famed for his Bravery, and so spotless in his Integrity; nor is it without Regret that I am obliged to relate the Treatment his Body met a Year after the Restoration, when it was taken up by express Command, and buried in a Pit in St. Margaret's Church-yard. Had he been guilty of the Murder of Charles I. to insult his Body had been a mean Revenge; but as he was innocent, it was, at least, Inhumanity, and, perhaps, Ingenuity. *Let no Man, says the oriental Proverb, pull a dead Lyon by the Beard.*

But that Regard which was denied his Body has been paid to his better Remains, his Name and his Memory. Nor has any Writer dared to deny him the Praise of his Intrepidity, Honesty, Contempt of Wealth, and Love of his Country. *He was the first Man, says Clarendon, that declined the old Track, and made it apparent that the Sciences might be attained in less Time than was imagined.* — *He was the first Man that brought Ships to command Castles on Shore, which had ever been thought very formidable, but were discovered by him to make a Noise only, and to fright those, who could rarely be hurt by them.* He was the first that infused that Proportion of Courage into Seamen, by

by making them see, by Experience, what mighty Things they could do if they were resolved, and taught them to fight in Fire as well as open the Water; and though he has been very well imitated and followed, was the first that gave the Example of that kind of unequal Courage, and bold and resolute Achievements.

To this Attestation of his military Excellence, may be proper to subjoin an Account of his moral Character from the Author of *Lives English and Foreign*. *He was jealous*, says that Writer, of the Liberty of the Subject, and the Glory of his Nation; and as he made use of no mean Artifices to raise himself to the highest Command at Sea, so he needed no Interest but his Merit to support him in it. *He scorned nothing more than Money*, which, as safe as it came in, was laid out by him in the Service of the State; and to see that he was animated by that brave, publick Spirit, which has since been reckoned rather romanicke than heroicke, he was so disinterested, that though no Man had more Opportunities to enrich himself than he, who had taken so many Millions from the Enemies of England, yet he threw it all into the publick Treasury, and did not die 500 l. richer than his Father left him: *Which the Author avers from his personal Knowledge of his Family and their Circumstances, having been bred up in it, and often heard his Brother give this Account of him.* *He was religious according to the pretended Purity of these Times, but would frequently allow himself to be merry with his Officers, and by his Tenderness and Generosity to the Seamen had so endeared himself to them, that when he dyed they lamented his Loss as that of a common Father.*

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Instead of more Testimonies, his Character may be properly concluded with one incident of his Life, by which it appears how much the Spirit of *Blake* was superior to all private Views. His Brother, in the last Action with the Spaniards, having not done his Duty, was, at *Blake's* Desire disengaged, and the Ship was given to another; yet was he not less regardful of him as a Brother: For when he died he left him his Estate, knowing him well qualified to adorn or enjoy a private Fortune, though he had found him unfit to serve his Country in a publick Character; and had therefore not suffered him to rob it.

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